Factors Influencing Healthcare of Homeless Vietnam Veterans

STTI 43rd Biennial Convention
Las Vegas, NV
07 November - 11 November 2015
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Focus of Inquiry

• US Veterans comprise 10% of the population
• They account for 17% of homeless adults.
• A typical homeless veteran
  – served during the Vietnam era
  – is in their 60’s or older
  – is disabled

• Homeless Vietnam Veterans have
  – Major medical problems
  – Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
  – Anxiety
  – Alcohol or drug dependencies

• Less likely to seek medical attention
Statement of Purpose

• The purpose of this study was to explore the healthcare decision-making factors of homeless Vietnam Veterans.
Aims

• To develop a theory grounded in data that might explain why HVV sought or did not seek health care
• To determine specific factors that contributed to and influenced HVV’s decision-making processes
• To determine if specific behavior patterns were relevant in the decision-making process and what these behavior patterns were.
Literature Review

• Homelessness
  – *Social selection, socioeconomic adversity, traumatic experiences*

• Healthcare Access
  – *Personal, situational, and bureaucratic barriers*

• Substance Use
  – *More than 2/3rds have a substance abuse problem*

• Mental Health Issues
  – *PTSD, social isolation, mental health disabilities, community separation, low self-esteem*
Gaps in the Literature

• Qualitative research is lacking
  – Case studies
  – Oral histories
• Multi-disciplinary research is needed
• Nursing assessments, interventions, planning, and implementation needs improvement
• Methods for improved communication
• Nursing education
Philosophical Underpinnings

• Symbolic Interactionism

• 3 foundational principles:
  – Meaning
  – Thought
  – Language

• Situations are analyzed to determine proper behavior as it applies to the understanding of reality.
Methodology

• Grounded theory methodology (GTM)
• Straussian GTM
  – Begins with in-depth interviews
  – Open, Axial & Selective coding
• Constant comparison
• Data saturation
• Theory emerges after comparing coded data and categories
**Setting**

- Vietnam-era veterans
- Living in homeless camps or on the street
- Access homeless services at ARCH

**Sample**

- Data was saturated with 11 participants
  - Key concepts were repeated
  - No new data emerged
Data Collection

After IRB approval:
- Recruitment Flyers, sign up at front desk of ARCH
- Demographics and Interview-based questionnaire
- Taped sessions
- Interviewer notes
  - Non-verbal body language
  - Perceptions
- Additional field notes afterward
- Transcript checked for accuracy
- Memos in transcripts
Data Analysis

- Concepts
- Categories
  - Proportional
  - Dimensional
  - Multiple perspectives
- Concurrent with Data Collection
  - Themes
  - Patterns
- Theoretical sensitivity
Scientific Rigor

• Criteria to verify rigor:
  – Credibility
    • Truth or accuracy of the data
  – Transferability
    • Ability to apply findings to other populations
  – Dependability
    • Ability of other researchers to replicate the study
  – Conformability
    • Neutral presentation of results free from bias
HVV Healthcare Utilization Model

Access Issues
- Long Wait Times
- Inconvenient Location
- Lost Records
- System Inefficiencies

Health Care Decision Making

Military Experiences
- (non-modifiable)

Substance Use

Homelessness

I Heard it Through the Grapevine
Assumptions

• HVV never access any healthcare services, regardless of whether it was from the VA or community
• HVV have no resources, other than pan-handling or begging
• PTSD is present in the majority of HVV, contributing to their inability to make effective healthcare decisions
Implications for Practice

- Substance abuse, PTSD, and physical and mental health issues must be recognized quickly and included in nursing assessments.
- Clinics are needed with efficient intake procedures.
- Collaboration between VA and community healthcare facilities.
- Multi-disciplinary planning and implementing of healthcare to ensure quality and convenience of services for HVV.
- Professional awareness of verbal and non-verbal communication that may deter open lines of communication and impede access to healthcare for HVV.
Future Research

• Significance of the relationship between the homeless and their dogs, regardless of whether the participant is a veteran or not.

• Aimed at younger homeless veterans in returning to productive roles in society and maintaining housing.
Future Research: Women

- Women’s issues when dual roles exist: military and family responsibilities.
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VETERANS DAY
November 11, 1992
Arlington National Cemetery